

Information Source Utilization by Tribal Women of Rural Mizoram

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Abstract

A study was conducted to find the information source utilization by tribal women in Mizoram. For the present study 3 districts viz., Lunglei, Aizawl and Serchhip were purposively selected. A total of 300 respondents were selected based on proportionate sampling from 12 villages. Appropriate statistical tools were applied for analysis. The study revealed that among the mean score of different sources of information utilization, interpersonal cosmopolite sources ranked first, which is followed by personal localite and personal cosmopolite sources. In case of interpersonal cosmopolite sources, smart-phone is the most often used (89.00%) source of information followed by internet (65.34%). Among personal cosmopolite sources, Panchayat member is most often contacted for information source by 56.67 per cent of the respondents, which is followed by 47.34 per cent of the respondents who use progressive farmers as the source of information. Friends, relatives and neighbours also play an important role in disseminating information among women in the villages. It has also been found that for 33.00 per cent of the respondents, MzsrIm is most often used source of information among personal cosmopolite sources. VFAs/VLWs were also contacted often by 25.67 per cent of the respondents. It is also found that majority i.e., 69.00 per cent of the respondents have medium level utilization of all information sources, which is followed by 16.67 per cent belonging to the high-level utilization category and 14.33 per cent are under low level utilization category.

Key words: Information, Utilization, Localite, Cosmopolite, Tribal women

Information is an essential component of farming practice and serves as the foundation for extension service [1]. The flow of information should be as clear, well-interpreted, accepted, and liked by users as feasible, and also be as fast as possible [2]. In the present era, information is power, and those with access to and utilization capacity for information sources outperform many others [3]. Information sources play an important role in communicating innovative technology to end users, not only making them aware of relevant information but also creating curiosity, promoting understanding, assisting with mental appraisal, and eventually motivating them to adopt [4]. The worth of information is determined by its content, relevancy, and timeliness. In this setting, users must be aware of the many sources of information, services available, and current information systems in order to get the correct information at the right time [5]. Communication is required to overcome ignorance and poverty in order to achieve economic and social well-being. In fact, information is not only a resource; it is also a catalytic component that stimulates people to make the correct decisions at the appropriate time, thus enhancing the farming community's overall production capacity [6]. Information has been well thought-out as critical input and component for agriculture and rural development [7].

Information source utilization refers to the degree of utilization of sources from where a farmer can derive information about management of resources in a sustainable manner and enhance his knowledge and understanding. It includes mass media sources (radio, television, newspaper and

magazines), digital technologies or ICTs (SMS, phone calls, mobile apps, websites and information systems), personal localite sources (relatives, neighbors, friends and progressive farmers) and personal cosmopolite channels (Government officials, agriculture/veterinary university, co-operatives and non-governmental organizations) [8].

The Mizo people are a Tibeto-Burmese ethnic group native to the Indian state of Mizoram and neighbouring regions of Northeast India. About 95% of Mizoram's population descends from a diverse tribal origin. According to 2011 census, there are 10, 97,206 people living in Mizoram, where 5, 55,339 are men and 5, 41,867 are women. This suggests that women make up about half of the population of Mizoram. Living in a patriarchal society, the early Mizo women were placed at a very low status. In comparison to where they were fifty years ago, tribal women in Mizoram have gone a long way. It has been discovered that, despite the difficulties they confront, women directly or indirectly contribute to the financial well-being of their families. Furthermore, they have found a place in every sector of the economy, including agriculture, industry, finance, and marketing. Various networks of women's groups have also played an important role in empowering programmes, particularly income-generation activities [9].

Different types of information sources are utilized by the tribal women of Mizoram for various activities. Information sources play a vital role in carrying the messages required for carrying out their livelihood activities efficiently. The extents

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to which these information sources are utilized by tribal women in the rural areas of Mizoram have not been studied in detail. Therefore, the present study is aimed to identify the level of utilization of information sources by the tribal women of rural Mizoram.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Descriptive and analytical research design was used for the study. The present study was conducted in the state of Mizoram where three districts viz., Lunglei, Aizawl and Serchhip were purposefully selected. From these three districts two rural development blocks each were selected. From the selected R. D. Blocks two villages each were selected making it a total of 12 villages. The respondents were selected based on proportionate sampling with a total of 300 respondents. Descriptive and analytical research design was used for the study. The study consisted of two types of data collection viz., primary data and secondary data. The primary data were collected through personal interview by the investigator using interview schedule developed for the purpose. The secondary data were collected from other relevant sources such as books, thesis, journals etc. Data from questionnaire interviews were coded and entered into SPSS software package for analysis.

Twenty-two information sources frequently utilized by the rural women were analysed for the present study. A three-point rating scale weighing 0,1,2 and 3 for no, sometimes, often and most often was used to explore the extent of utilization of the information sources. The total score obtained by each respondent was calculated after which the mean was calculated to rank the order of information sources.

The extent of utilization of each of the information sources such as personal localite, personal cosmopolite and impersonal cosmopolite sources were calculated by categorizing the respondents into three groups using mean and standard deviation. The low utilization level was calculated by subtracting standard deviation from the mean while the high utilization level was calculated by adding standard deviation with the mean. The value between the low and high utilization falls into the medium utilization category.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Information source utilization

Making decisions, avoiding mistakes, conveying a positive message, generating revenue, providing for one's livelihood, etc. were all made easier with the proper use of information sources.

Table 1 Distribution of respondents based on information source utilization (n=300)

Table 1. Distribution of respondents based on information source utilization (n=500)											
S. No.	Information source utilization	Most often		Often		Sometimes		Never		Mean	Rank
		F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P		
Personal localite											
1.	Relatives	76	25.33	128	42.67	96	32.00	0	0	13	II
2.	Friends	52	17.33	171	57.00	77	25.67	0	0		
3	Neighbours	79	26.33	138	46.00	83	27.67	0	0		
3.	Progressive farmers	142	47.34	84	28.00	55	18.33	19	6.33		
4.	Local leaders	139	46.33	154	51.34	7	2.33	0	0		
5.	Panchayat member	170	56.67	129	43.00	1	0.33	0	0		
Personal cosmopolite											
1.	AO	5	1.67	28	9.33	63	21.00	204	68.00	8.64	III
2.	HO	0	0	5	1.67	73	24.33	222	74.00		
3.	VLW/VFA	97	32.34	85	28.33	58	19.33	60	20.00		
4.	KVK	10	3.33	13	4.33	69	23	208	69.34		
5.	Vety.	77	25.67	80	26.67	17	5.66	126	42.00		
6.	ATMA	11	3.67	19	6.33	77	25.67	107	35.67		
7.	MZSRLM	99	33.00	148	49.33	14	4.67	38	12.67		
8.	Others	90	30.00	115	38.33	69	23.00	26	8.67		
Impersonal cosmopolite											
1.	Radio	0	0	0	0	53	17.67	247	82.33	14.22	I
2.	T.V.	153	51.00	104	34.67	43	14.33	0	0		
3.	Smart phone	267	89.00	20	6.67	13	4.33	0	0		
4.	Mobile apps	151	50.33	131	43.67	18	6.00	0	0		
5.	Internet	196	65.34	91	30.33	13	4.33	0	0		
6	Newspaper	34	11.33	72	24.00	115	38.33	79	26.34		
7.	Printed media	27	9.00	81	27.00	77	25.67	115	38.33		
8	Exhibition	0	0	0	0	75	25.00	225	75.00		
9.	Mass meeting	24	8.00	88	29.33	129	43.00	59	19.67		
Total		100	100	100	100	100	100	300	100		

Data depicted in (Table 1) presented the distribution of respondents according to the utilization of information sources. According to the (Table 1), interpersonal cosmopolite sources

was placed first, followed by personal localite sources and interpersonal cosmopolite sources in terms of the mean score of various sources of information use. Smart phones are the most

often used source of information (89.00%) followed by the internet (65.34%) and 17.67% of people say they occasionally listen to radio. This shows that ICT (Information Communication Technology) is commonly used by the respondents as a source of information which is in line with the findings of Panda *et al.* [10]. The Table also reveals that among personal cosmopolitan sources, Mzsrlm (Mizoram State Rural Livelihood Mission) is the most often used source of information for 33.00% of the respondents. This is primarily because Mzsrlm was involved in the establishment and effective operation of SHGs on the state level. 25.67% of the respondents reported that VFAs/VLWs were also contacted frequently.

They are the villagers' main point of contact with the authorities; hence the majority of issues relating to agricultural and animal care are brought to their attention initially. The prevalence of ASF (African Swine Fever) has also boosted

VFA's significance in the villages. Information is also available from FOCUS (Fostering Climate Resilient Upland Farming Systems in the North East), NEIDA (North East Initiative Development Agency), IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), MOM (Mission Organic Mizoram), and NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development). Although FOCUS is not yet operating in the Lunglei district, they have played a significant role in the Aizawl and Serchhip districts by providing farmers with input such as insecticides and fertilizers.

In terms of personal cosmopolitan sources, 56.67% of the respondents contacted Panchayat members most frequently for information, followed by 47.34% of the respondents who used progressive farmers as the source of information. People in the Mizo community are eager to share information and are a close-knit group so; friends, family, and neighbours play a significant role in information dissemination in the villages.

Table 2 Distribution of respondents based on level of utilization of personal localite sources (n=300)

S. No.	Respondent	Level of utilization of personal localite sources	F	P	Mean	S. D.
1.	Lunglei	Low (<11)	6	6.00	13	2
		Medium (11-15)	50	50.00		
		High (>15)	44	44.00		
2	Aizawl	Low (<10)	4	4.00	12	2
		Medium (10-14)	82	82.00		
		High (>14)	14	14.00		
3	Serchhip	Low (<11.65)	12	12.00	13.65	2
		Medium (11.65-15.65)	69	69.00		
		High (>15.65)	19	19.00		
4	Pooled	Low (<11)	22	7.33	13	2
		Medium (11-15)	201	67.00		
		High (>15)	77	25.67		

Data in (Table 2) indicated that majority i.e., 67 per cent of the respondents have medium level utilization of personal localite sources, which is followed by 25.67 per cent belonging to the high-level utilization category. Further 7.33 per cent are under low level utilization category. The mean utilization level is 13 with a standard deviation of 2. It can also be seen from the Table that 50.00, 82.00 and 69.00 per cent of the respondents from Lunglei, Aizawl and Serchhip district respectively are under medium level utilization category. This is followed by 44.00, 14.00 and 19.00 per cent of the respondents from

Lunglei, Aizawl and Serchhip district respectively under high level utilization category. Further, 6.00, 4.00 and 12.00 per cent of the respondents from Lunglei, Aizawl and Serchhip district respectively were under low level utilization category.

Personal localite sources of information such as neighbours, friends, family etc. is an important source of information for the respondents. These sources of information are easily accessible; information is passed along through words of mouth in the villages that is why it is the most of the respondents fall in the medium utilization category.

Table 3 Distribution of respondents based on level of utilization of personal cosmopolite sources (n=300)

S. No.	Respondent	Level of utilization of personal cosmopolite sources	F	P	Mean	S. D.
1.	Lunglei	Low (<4.64)	16	16.00	8.59	3.95
		Medium (4.64-12.54)	68	68.00		
		High (>12.54)	16	16.00		
2	Aizawl	Low (<5.19)	19	19.00	8.42	3.23
		Medium (5.19-11.65)	62	62.00		
		High (>11.65)	19	19.00		
3	Serchhip	Low (<5.54)	14	14.00	8.93	3.39
		Medium (5.54-12.32)	72	72.00		
		High (>12.32)	14	14.00		
4	Pooled	Low (<5.12)	57	19.00	8.65	3.53
		Medium (5.12-12.18)	202	67.33		
		High (>12.18)	41	13.67		

The data in (Table 3) emphasized that majority i.e., 67.33 per cent of the respondents have medium level utilization of personal cosmopolite sources, which is followed by 19.00 per cent belonging to the low-level utilization category. Further

13.67 per cent are under high level utilization category. The mean utilization level is 13 with a standard deviation of 2 [11].

The data depicted in (Table 1) further reflected that 68.00, 62.00 and 72.00 per cent of the respondents from

Lunglei, Aizawl and Serchhip district respectively are under medium level utilization category. This is followed by 16.00, 19.00 and 14.00 per cent of the respondents from Lunglei, Aizawl and Serchhip district respectively under both low and high level utilization category. Majority of the respondents are

not hesitant to contact with personal cosmopolite sources when they are in need of information related to their farms or livestock. They had sought help during the outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF), Fall Army Worm (FAW) and other crop related problems [12].

Table 4 Distribution of respondents based on level of utilization of impersonal cosmopolite sources (n=300)

S. No.	Respondent	Level of utilization of impersonal cosmopolite sources	F	P	Mean	S. D.
1.	Lunglei	Low (<10.71)	17	17.00	13.96	3.25
		Medium (10.71-17.21)	70	70.00		
		High (>17.21)	13	13.00		
2	Aizawl	Low (<11.77)	14	14.00	14.53	2.76
		Medium (11.77-17.29)	72	72.00		
		High (>17.29)	14	14.00		
3	Serchhip	Low (<11.91)	11	11.00	14.17	2.26
		Medium (11.91-16.43)	73	73.00		
		High (>16.43)	16	16.00		
4	Pooled	Low (<11.43)	42	14.00	14.22	2.79
		Medium (11.43-17.01)	193	64.33		
		High (>17.01)	65	21.67		

Data in (Table 4) highlighted that majority i.e., 64.33 per cent of the respondents have medium level utilization of impersonal cosmopolite sources, which is followed by 21.67 per cent belonging to the high-level utilization category. Further 14.00 per cent are under low level utilization category. The mean utilization level is 13 with a standard deviation of 2. The Table further indicated that 70.00, 72.00 and 73.00 per cent of the respondents from Lunglei, Aizawl and Serchhip district respectively are under medium level utilization category. This is followed by 13.00, 14.00 and 16.00 per cent of the respondents from Lunglei, Aizawl and Serchhip district

respectively under high level utilization of impersonal cosmopolite sources category. Further, 17.00, 14.00 and 11.00 per cent of the respondents from Lunglei, Aizawl and Serchhip district respectively under low level utilization of impersonal cosmopolite sources category [13].

The respondents mainly use impersonal cosmopolite sources such as smart phones, T.V., radio etc for faster dissemination of information. Even among the villagers, their use is growing in popularity. At the Panchayat level, Whatsapp group is one of the most widely utilised applications for information sharing.

Table 5 Distribution of respondents based on their overall utilization of information sources (n=300)

S. No.	Respondent	Level of utilization level of information sources	F	P	Mean	S. D.
1.	Lunglei	Low (<30.2)	15	15.00	35.65	5.45
		Medium (30.2-41.1)	69	69.00		
		High (>41.1)	16	16.00		
2	Aizawl	Low (<30.26)	19	19.00	35.21	4.95
		Medium (30.26-38.13)	50	50.00		
		High (>38.13)	31	31.00		
3	Serchhip	Low (<29.68)	4	4.00	36.75	7.07
		Medium (29.68-43.82)	86	86.00		
		High (>43.82)	10	10.00		
4	Pooled	Low (<30.76)	43	14.33	35.87	5.11
		Medium (30.76-40.98)	207	69.00		
		High (>40.98)	50	16.67		

Data depicted in (Table 5) revealed that majority i.e., 69.00 per cent of the respondents have medium level utilization of all information sources, which is followed by 16.67 per cent belonging to the high-level utilization category. Further 14.33 per cent are under low level utilization category. The mean utilization level is 13 with a standard deviation of 2. It can also be seen from the (Table 5) that 69.00, 50.00 and 86.00 per cent of the respondents from Lunglei, Aizawl and Serchhip district respectively are under medium level utilization category. This is followed by 16.00, 31.00 and 10.00 per cent of the respondents from Lunglei, Aizawl and Serchhip district respectively under high level utilization category. Further, 15.00, 19.00 and 4.00 per cent of the respondents from Lunglei, Aizawl and Serchhip district respectively under low level utilization category [14].

Reliable source of information provides timely information to the rural population. Internet is accessible now in most of the villages of Mizoram, this increased the use of various mass media sources. Along with the advancement in technology traditional sources of information are also still in use. Information is also passed along verbally from one person to another. The people in the villages are using the resources available in the most efficient way possible.

CONCLUSION

The study shows that personal localite sources are preferred by many respondents but these sources lack scientific knowledge so there is a need to increase the credibility of these information sources. It is necessary to provide more trainings to

progressive farmers and local leaders as they are the main source of information in the rural areas. The communication between officials and women needs to be increased so that effective communication of information will be achieved in the rural areas. The gap in communication between the officials and rural women could be bridged by employing more women extension workers which will allow the women to open up and share their issues effectively with the officials. The respondents have mentioned that there is a barrier in communicating with male officials for some of the issues relating to problems faced only by women. To make personal cosmopolite sources more effective motivational activities like farm and home visit, mass campaign, demonstration activities etc. should be organized by the government organizations. The field level extension workers of agriculture and allied sector should be well

acquainted with the local problems and needs, so that they can satisfy the information need of the rural women. The use of mass media like smartphone with internet connectivity is becoming popular in the dissemination of information even in rural areas. Important information was passed along in WhatsApp groups among the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) members and the community as well. The credibility of information passed along the internet must be also checked so that only reliable information will be passed to the community. There is a good scope to improve the utilization of information sources. As the research is done in a limited area, it should be undertaken in other parts of the state and the country in general to make more specific and appropriate policy for further improvement of the dissemination of information among rural women.

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